



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

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ALIEN HARBORER SENTENCED TO 52 MONTHS IN PRISON

PHOENIX – Juan Jose Hernandez-Pedro, AKA Sergio Rodriguez-Mendoza, 20, of Guatemala, was sentenced here yesterday by U.S. District Judge Neil v. Wake to 52 months in federal prison. Hernandez-Pedro pleaded guilty on November 8, 2007, to a charge of harboring illegal aliens. Judge Wake imposed sentencing enhancements for the number of illegal aliens harbored, the brandishing of a firearm, holding illegal aliens against their will in exchange for payment, and injury to one of the illegal aliens. At the completion of his federal prison sentence, Hernandez-Pedro will be deported to Guatemala.

As part of his plea agreement, Hernandez-Pedro admitted that on August 21, 2007, he was working with three other individuals to conceal and harbor illegal aliens at a house on North 37th Place in Phoenix. The house contained 61 people, all of whom were illegal aliens. Hernandez-Pedro admitted that they held the illegal aliens involuntarily in rooms with boarded windows while waiting for their sponsors to pay their smuggling fees.

One of the smugglers carried and displayed an AK-47-type rifle as a means of ensuring the aliens did not leave the house without permission. At least one of the aliens suffered bodily injury while in the house. Hernandez-Pedro admitted that he knew the people in the house were illegal aliens and that he intended to assist them in remaining in the U.S. unlawfully in exchange for money or other financial benefits.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The prosecution was handled by Joseph E. Koehler, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-07-981-PHX-NVW
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